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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

March 1954 No.9

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I. A REPORT ON CHINA

(The following report is from an English missionary who taught science in a school in China for five years until her departure in August, 1953)

During our few days spring holiday last year, I was waiting with a crowd of the younger members of the staff to start off for a communal picnic, when the chairman of our department casually mentioned to me that, if my husband's mother and brother wished to leave China, they should apply at the immigration office at Tsingtao. That was the way in which our impressive letter to Foreign Minister Chou En Lai at Peking was finally answered. Actually it was very typical of the present set-up in China, where everything is accomplished by and through organisations or groups rather than by and through individuals. Anyway, the result was very gratifying, for their application was immediately granted, and the local police assured us that there would be no difficulty in allowing them to wait until my husband and I had completed our applications, so that we could all travel together. After that, while I continued my work in the College, the other members of the household devoted themselves to the task of packing up what we could take with us of our household articles, and of selling the rest. Fortunately, a society still exists for the repatriation of German nationals stranded in China without means of support, and the travelling arrangements for us all, and the expenses of all members of the family except myself, were undertaken by this society. Finally, at the end of the College term, we were all ready to leave, and a notice came from the police telling us that our exit permits were ready, and we should go on August 11. At the College, I was given a friendly, informal, farewell party, at which members of the staff and representatives of the students spoke in appreciation of my work. The chairman even went so far as to say how much they would look forward to arranging a welcome party, should I be able to return! My own students presented me with a recent photo of our group, suitably inscribed and framed. I was moved by the tributes paid to my work, because I knew that they were genuine, and that though so many of those present were Communists, they had really appreciated the work I had done for them, which they knew was prompted by a Christian idea of service.

I want to try to give you a true, though brief, picture of what things are really like in the part of China we knew. All the letters I have written for the last three years have been addressed, not only to my friends, but also to the Tsinan Police, through whose scrutiny they had certainly to pass. What I wrote, though always quite true, was therefore only one side - the good side - of the picture. It is important to remember that there is a good side, but to see that side only is also wrong. Often I have remarked on the support given me by my students, but I never wrote that most of the staff were afraid to come to my house for a visit. I told how they kindly granted me a holiday last Christmas Day, but I did not mention that on Christmas Eve there were no carol singers, and that our only Christmas visitor was the local policeman paying us an official call.

Freedom of Religion in China

First I must write a paragraph about freedom of religion and the Chinese Christian Church. Freedom of religion in China means that on Sunday, or on a week-day evening, provided one has no other task or duty or engagement imposed by the society to which one belongs, one may attend the place of worship of one's choice.

It definitely does not mean that one's whole life and thought may be governed by Christian ideas and principles: - no, that honour must be given to none but Marx and Lenin, as they are interpreted by Stalin and Mao Tse Tung. Moreover, on Sunday mornings when the only service takes place, there are often community tasks to be performed, such as cleaning the college buildings or sweeping the roads, or perhaps there is a political meeting which one should attend. To shirk such tasks is to invite criticism as a non-cooperative and non-progressive number of the community. The result is that only the very young, housewives and the very old, who are as a rule not included in any society bar the street groups, really have time to take part regularly in public Christian worship and the service of the Church. Even I, though exempt from political activities, found it very difficult to attend regularly, even on Sundays. Only the groups mentioned above are also relatively free from the mental conflict caused by outward conformity to Marxist ideas and inward devotion to Christ.

For those who have accustomed themselves to Western "straight" ways of thinking this is a continual agony without hope of alleviation. Please accept the fact that one has to conform outwardly. The alternative is not usually imprisonment: it is to become a social outcast, workless, bringing disgrace and disaster on family and dependents. Would you be willing to do that, possibly without the consent of your family, for Christ's sake? Would you even be right to do it? Under these favourable conditions, and without financial aid from abroad, how does the Church manage to exist? In a great number of churches, we know that numbers are few and financial difficulties are many, but the services are maintained Sunday by Sunday, and prayer meetings also held on weekdays. Some pastors wish to prove themselves "progressive", and preach sermons which are only sops to their political bosses for instance, the Easter sermon we heard in 1952 when the Resurrection message was mixed up with anti-bacterial warfare, but there are others who preach the Word faithfully and powerfully, whose sermons have helped us greatly. There are university professors and students who only manage to attend a church service seven times a year, but that they ever attend is something to thank God for. It is our impression that the Roman Catholics and the Fundamentalists stand up for their faith, on the whole, more firmly than the main branches of the Protestant Church. Is it because their adherents are more certain of what they believe? The churches we have attended are apt to be strong in personal devotion, but weak in outward-looking, ecumenical prayer. They ask us to continue to pray for them. Let us be faithfully in this one means of help which is still open to us.

Life in the New China

Now something about personal freedom. It is important to remember that all who go out to work, and particularly those who work in any kind of educational institution, are very, very busy. From the time the day starts with physical exercises at daybreak to the time it ends with "personal hygiene period", every moment is organised. Even the periods labelled "free activity" or "private study" actually take place in groups. Thus there is little or no privacy, and those who are considered politically backward and non-progressive are continually being exhorted and "helped" by the convinced Communists in their small group, who consider it their duty to lead others to the light of Marx and Lenin just as truly as we consider it our duty to lead others to the light of Christ. Indeed, only as we consider it as a religion can we begin to understand Communism. For the devoted Christian monk living in the strict Benedictine monastery, there is still

perfect freedom. He is free to serve his Lord in the way he has chosen, and that is all he asks. Similarly for the convinced and active Communist living in the Communist state, there is also perfect freedom. He is free to follow in the glorious footsteps of Marx, Lenin, Stalin and Mao Tse Tung, to learn more and more of their teaching, and to put it into practice in his daily life, and that is also all he asks. But for the atheist who is forced to live according to the Benedictine rule, as for the non-Communist who is forced to conform to a Communist society, there can only be a feeling of slavery, and a longing for liberation. It is equally likely to remain nothing but a longing, for there is no visible or probable way in which it can be accomplished.

We should remember, however, that in China at any rate there are compensations. The currency is stabilised, the roads are better, the railways have improved, there are more things in the shops at prices the general population can afford to buy; health services and education facilities are being made available to more people, and there is a great campaign towards literacy. People are impressed by these achievements, and by the propaganda, which, taken in massive daily doses, gradually has some effect. The actual achievements are, of course, not quite as great as those announced in the newspapers: for instance, the armistice in Korea was headed "Great Victory of the Chinese Volunteers". If people are told every day in several different ways that the Americans are criminals who want war, while the Russians are the leaders of the great camp of peace and progress, striving for the liberation of all mankind, they gradually begin to believe it. They gradually want to support the administration which paints itself in such rosy colours and purports to have such high aims. This is particularly so if one is a member of a progressive group, as I have been for the last year. One is infected by a spirit of working together for the common good, of striving upward and onward, and if I had not had a husband at home to show me the other side of the picture, I might have become quite "red". At the refugee camp in Germany (where the author stopped briefly after returning to Europe), a few miles from the East German border, we saw the other side much more grimly. We got the impression that the Chinese can "take" Communism much better than the Europeans. To many Chinese it is not wrong, but quite natural to say one thing and mean another: it is just part of their ordinary politeness. Communism is therefore there in all its outward ramifications, but it is actually sliding off many ordinary Chinese citizens like water off a duck's back, and the most deceived are the Communists themselves. The Europeans, as a rule, can't take it that way: they must either accept it or reject it and be broken by it, and the suffering is therefore much greater.

One more thing remains to be said: do not be misled, as so many well-meaning people have been, by the interviews which visitors to Communist countries report to the press. To every ordinary question there is an "official" answer. The ordinary members of the community in Communist countries all know what they ought to think and what they ought to say, and, when questioned by a stranger, will reply accordingly. They may mean what they say, i.e. their own ideas may already be entirely governed by the Party line, but one cannot assume that this is so. If one disagrees with or condemns the policy, or the results of the policy of the reigning power, or sees something to criticise, one would only mention the fact to one's husband, wife, or most trusted friend, certainly not to a foreign stranger through an interpreter. If you had visited me in China and asked me questions, I could not have told you my real, complete opinion, as I can do now. Such an interview inside and outside China would produce a different series of answers. Interviews of this kind, whether with Christians or non-Christians, cannot therefore be taken at their face value.

Finally, I can imagine some Church people wishing to ask me, "What are the results of your five year's work? We do not doubt that, from the scientific point of view, you did a worthwhile job, but what about the religious results, if any, of your work as a Christian missionary?" That, I must confess, only God can know. In an institution where even the singing of hymns in the dormitories is forbidden, and where students and staff visit one's home only on business or in groups, it is hard to do any evangelical work. I only know that my devotion to my work, and my willingness to help students and staff with any problem they presented, were commented on publicly in that Communist institution as an example to all. On the other hand, they were taught continually that only those whose lives were inspired by the teachings of Marx and Lenin could render the best and highest service to the community, while I was known to be a Christian missionary taking no part in political study. I can only hope that some of the more thoughtful ones have pondered this contradiction and that the result of their considering may, with God's further help, bear fruit in due season.

It is a well-known fact that a missionary always learns more than he teaches, and receives more than he gives. We feel that we have been given a great privilege in this interesting, torn world, to have been allowed to look intimately behind both sides of the iron curtain. We feel that neither is wholly good, neither is wholly bad. The new Communist world is a judgment on our old world: their over-emphasised community activity is a judgment on our unthinking, hard individualism:, their sloppiness in clothing and austerity in cosmetics is a judgment on our extravangance and artificiality; their compulsory newspaper reading and political discussions are a judgment on our preoccupation with private affairs and neglect of our public duty; their emphasis on right thought above all else is a judgment on our lax thinking. Let us not judge them: let us judge ourselves, and put our own house in order. They cannot alter their condition, but we can. We say we are free: then away with tiredness and excuses, and let us do our utmost to use our freedom for the true "liberation" of men from darkness of soul and body, in any way which is open to us.

II.

ADDRESS OF HROMADKA TO THE HUNGARIAN ECUMENICAL STUDY CONFERENCE

Prof. HROMADKA of Prague recently delivered an address to an Hungarian Ecumenical Study Conference organized by the Hungarian Ecumenical Committee and attended by about 100 church leaders, professors and pastors. The conference was part of the study program carried on in Hungary in preparation for the next Assembly of the World Council of Churches. The Churches in Hungary have been doing a remarkable job of making their members aware of the great spiritual issues which confront the ecumenical movement as it prepares for the Assembly. The preparatory documents and papers for the Assembly have been given wide circulation in the churches.

At the Study Conference there were many speeches on the issues arising from the main theme for the Assembly. With the exception of the speech of Prof. Hromadka these addresses were completely non-political. The quality of the theological addresses on the biblical foundations of the Christian Hope was excellent but the treatment of the theme was purely theological. This is typical of the situation. The temptation of most professors and pastors in Hungary today is not to adapt their message to the new ideology, but rather to withdraw into a theological fortress.

In this situation, in which everyone is deeply aware of the acute problem of the relation of the Church to its environment, but in which very few speak openly about it, Hromadka is unique, in that he speaks frankly about the issues concerning the Church's attitude to the new society and does so not as a mere propagandist but as a Christian theologian.

Summary of Hromadka's address

Hromadka began by congratulating the Hungarian Churches on their excellent work of preparation for the Assembly. He spoke with cordiality about the visit of the Bishop of Chichester and Dr. Visser't Hooft of the World Council of Churches. The success of the ecumenical movement cannot be taken for granted and there is reason for anxiety lest we fail at this particular moment. The differences which we had to face in the history of the ecumenical movement are as nothing compared with the differences which we have to face now. These differences have grown since Amsterdam. The question is whether our faith is strong enough to cope with this situation. Our divisions cut across the confessions. The question arises whether our inability to understand each other is due to differences in our attitude to Christ or whether it is due to different interpretations of the present historical situation.

Hromadka said that the present transformation of the world reaches into the depth of society and of spiritual and moral life. In fact the whole structure of history has changed. This is not merely a political event. The change goes even deeper in Hungary than it does in Czechoslovakia. The new leaders have a great vision and desire to reconstruct society as a whole. They work harder than any former groups of leaders we have had. All old values are being re-evaluated. We Christians must ask ourselves whether our

faith is as vigorous as the faith of those who now carry responsibility. It is too easy to adopt a merely negative attitude. The question is whether we work as hard as they do. The point is not that we should identify ourselves with what is going on. There is a clear difference between the Christian ideology and the ideology on which the new society is being founded. But that difference is somewhere else than many in the West think. There are among us many mere spectators or people who simply seek to conserve the relics of the old society. This temptation is especially acute for the churches. For certain groups which have been replaced by the new classes desire to withdraw behind the barriers of the Church. We are of course responsible for all church members including the reactionaries. We must preach to both communists and reactionaries, but we must not strengthen the reactionaries or conservatives in their false hopes. Our mission is to give faith to those who have been uprooted, who have no longer any immediate hope and we must seek to give them real faith.

There are of course many shortcomings and sins in the new society. We notice them every day and speak about these matters to our responsible leaders. Almost every week one has to point to injustices. We are not illusionists but we must ask to what extent the failures are also due to survivors of the old society who paralyse the vigour of the new social life. In Czechoslovakia we distinguish between real communists and those who are cooperating with the communists. It is often a real joy to work with true communists. But it is most trying to have to work with those who only pretend to be communist and who really think to use communism for their own advantage. We are not obliged to speak against communism but we must speak against the lack of veracity and truthfulness.

It is of course wrong to say that the churches have no difficulties in the new society. But we must recognize that the churches were far more identified with the old structure than we ever realized. Not every difficulty which the Church experiences today is due to an attack upon the Church. We must of course have a sense of solidarity with all members of the Church and intervene whenever any are in trouble. We must not think that every difficulty has necessarily to do with the spiritual task of the Church.

Our Western friends are surprised that we say "yes" to the situation. They interpret this as either opportunism or as illusionism. But this is a witness to our faith. Every sermon we preach is a criticism of Marxism, but it is a criticism of a positive kind.

We live amidst many secular hopes such as humanism and the almost eschatological hope in the classless society. Now we have our own Christian hope and we confess it. The hope in Jesus Christ is however on another level than the hopes of the world. We cannot simply say that these human hopes are false hopes. For hope is only false when it becomes a religious hope. The real hope in Jesus Christ is not in contradiction with relative hopes of this world. The hope in a classless society is not in itself a false hope. It only becomes a false hope when it is believed that the classless society will solve all moral and spiritual problems. That is why I have said again and again to the communists: the time will come when you will recognize that you need us, because the classless society will not solve the big issues of social and economic life.

The great question is whether our witness is truly relevant, whether we preach Christ crucified and risen in such a way that we are taken seriously. Some years ago the communists did not believe that I was politically reliable. They said: "According to our ideology he must be a reactionary". Later on they said: "Hromadka means it, but since he is a progressive man he cannot be a good theologian. Theology just happens to be his profession and that is why he must say these things". But now they no longer doubt my Christian faith and so they say: "We cannot understand it, but he believes in Christ".

The Church must always be an enigma to the world. I am not afraid that the Church will be destroyed by communism, but I am afraid of our lack of faith. As we now look forward to Evanston we see two tendencies. Many, whether they admit it or not, wish to use the ecumenical movement as an instrument to fortify the churches in their complacency. Thus the Church would become a Maginot line or start a crusade. This tendency exists also in our own churches. On the other hand there are those who would make Evanston the occasion for deep self-examination and for listening to the Lord who makes all things new. We cannot be sure which tendency will prevail. We can only pray that Jesus Christ may overwhelm us. Our coming together here in these days may be a step in the right direction.

Hromadka was asked just what he meant by his "yes" to the situation. He answered that he could accept Marxism as an analytical method and as a corrective, but not as metaphysics. In this connection it should be noted that Hromadka has in several cases intervened in order to help church leaders who were in trouble.

III.

" THE PROBLEM OF THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT "

(from the Journal of the Patriarchate of Moscow - No.1 January 1954)

Christianity enters the year of 1954 under the auspices of the preparations for the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches, fixed for August of this year in Evanston (USA).

The Christian Churches hold very diverse positions with regard to this question: some take, generally speaking, no part at all in the ecumenical movement, others waver in their attitude to it, while finally there is a certain group that is most active in all the different branches of the work of the World Council of Churches.

Most of the regional churches of the Orthodox Church, among them the Russian Church, have already considered this question at the Moscow Conference of leaders and representatives of their churches, and by declining to accept an invitation to the Assembly, have refused to cooperate in the ecumenical movement.

Without taking part in the ecumenical movement, the Russian Church follows its development with great attentiveness, since it has a lively interest in the efforts of western Christianity to find a path to church unity.

Some Orthodox Churches, such as Constantinople and the Church of Greece, take an active part in the work of the different organs of the World Council of Churches. Thus, at the First Assembly, the Exarch of the See of Constantinopl the Metropolitan of Thyateira, Germanos, was elected as one of the Presidents of the World Council of Churches, while the Metropolitan of Edessa, Panteleimon, the Professor of the University of Athens, H. Alivisatos, Professor Panayotides and others became members of the Central Committee.

But even among the Orthodox members of the ecumenical movement there is no general agreement as regards the question whether the Orthodox Church should work together with the World Council in an active way.

The Roman Catholic Church is not a member of the World Council of Churches officially; it plays the part of a spectator only, but does not forbid its members to take part in the treatment of academic problems or to enter into general discussions on questions of Church and Society with the Protestants. Protestantism, all the main currents of which are found within the World Council of Churches, forms the core of the ecumenical movement. There are over 100 different groups represented in it and therefore it is not surprising that we do not find unanimity among them. Within the World Council we see the sharp differences that exist in theological as well as in socio-political questions, and which have become only too clear in the course of the preparation for the Second Assembly.

These preparations were begun immediately after the First Assembly. Already in June 1950, at the meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council in Toronto (Canada) the theme of the Second Assembly "Christ, the only Hope of the World" was decided upon. At the next meeting of the Central Committee that was held at Rolle (Switzerland) in August 1951, the following

subsidiary themes for the six sections of the Second Assembly were proposed.... (here follows an enumeration of the subsidiary themes).

The theme of section 1 of the Second Assembly was approved by the Third World Conference for Faith and Order in Lund (Sweden) in August 1953.

The Lund Conference dealt with this theme from three points of view: the Nature of the Church, Ways of Worship and Intercommunion. The discussion of these questions revealed the basic differences of opinion of the participants, as much in the definition of the conception of the Church, as in the question of its nature. It suffices to say here that as regards the sacraments, the Orthodox members could not only not claim to be in agreement with their colleagues of other faiths, but even among themselves there was no unanimity. In the same way there was between the representatives of the Anglican Churches a lack of agreement on many questions. Insoluble difficulties were encountered in the discussion of such questions as the relation between Christology and Ecclesiology, what in fact constitutes the unity of the Church, the conception of the Eucharist, of sacrifice and so on.

Thus the discussions on this theme at the Lund Conference showed how insufficient were the attempts made by the different Christian groups to form a close alliance on the basis of a "dogmatic minimum", and the work of the Commission for Faith and Order at Lund became in this respect a strange "dogmatic tower of Babel" as the Observer of the Patriarchate of Alexandria pungently remarked.

Thus it is difficult to prophesy what positive results will come from the development of the first and most important theme of the Second Assembly. The themes of the other sections of the Second Assembly develop on the socio-economic and above all on the political plane that abstract unionism that could hold the members of the ecumenical movement within the sphere of influence of the World Council of Churches. This offers to the Council the possibility of entering the world's political stage in the role of an influential international power, of which the more important landmarks of the preparation for the Evanston Assembly are a proof. In spite of all protests that it transcends political and class differences, the World Council of Churches takes in socio-economic and political questions a very definite position. Already in July 1949, at the meeting of the Central Committee in Chichester much was said and a good number of decisions were made which openly or in a concealed way condemned the socio-economic and political order in the people's democracies. In July 1950 at the meeting of the Central Committee in Toronto the well-known Stockholm Proclamation of Peace was rejected and the policy of the Anglo-American bloc in UNO regarding the Korean question was approved. In August 1951, at the meeting of the Central Committee in Rolle, a decision was made with regard to the defence of peace, which virtually condemned the activity of the World Peace Council. At the meeting from December 1952 until January 1953 of the Central Committee in Lucknow (India), a message to UNO was agreed upon, which expressed to the Anglo-American bloc thanks for the conduct of its policy in Korea.

Such organs of the World Council of Churches as its Executive Committee, the Economic and Social Council, the Department for Inter-Church Aid and Service to Refugees, the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs,

take in political and socioeconomic questions a very definite position. In this respect the declaration of the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, Dr. Visser't Hooft, at the meeting of the Central Committee in Lucknow, is extremely characteristic. "The Commission of the Churches on International Affairs exercises", he says, "a very definite influence on the circles that are determinant in the making of political decisions".

No doubt exists as to the political features of these circles. It is sufficient to remind ourselves of the participation of active members of the World Council with their General Secretary at their head in the fifth meeting of the so-called Ecumenical Committee for European Unity which took place in Paris from February 28th until March 1st last year and which considered the possibilities of the entrance of new members into the proposed Steel and Coal Union and the European Defence Community.

The numerous meetings, sessions, discussions and gatherings which are frequently held under the auspices of the World Council of Churches or its organs for the discussion of ecumenical questions serve essentially the same ends.

Without going here into a detailed analysis of the activity of the World Council of Churches, we shall, in the wish to give a broad sketch of its work, refer solely to the special interest that is given by the ecumenical movement to the problems of Africa, and in particular to those of Asia. In the discussion of just these problems, the World Council of Churches reveals its political face which stands out in striking contrast to the high aims laid down in its constitution. In this respect the decisions of the 1st Conference of the East Asian Churches, which was held in Bangkok in December 1950, and the decisions of the so-called Ecumenical Study Conference for East Asia, held from the 26th to 30th of December in Lucknow are very revealing.

Regardless of the repeated declarations of the leading ecumenical workers on the defence of peace there still exist between the World Council of Churches and the World Peace Council no real relations, a circumstance that provokes grave apprehensions as to the immediate purposes of the ecumenical movement, although this movement was originally directed towards the opening up of ways to the Church of Christ. Today, when the preparations for the Assembly in Evanston are to an increasing extent bringing to our notice the tasks of the Christian ecumenical movement, we shall follow the development of this movement with great attentiveness, and come to grips in the columns of the journal of the Patriarchate of Moscow with the theory and practice of the movement.